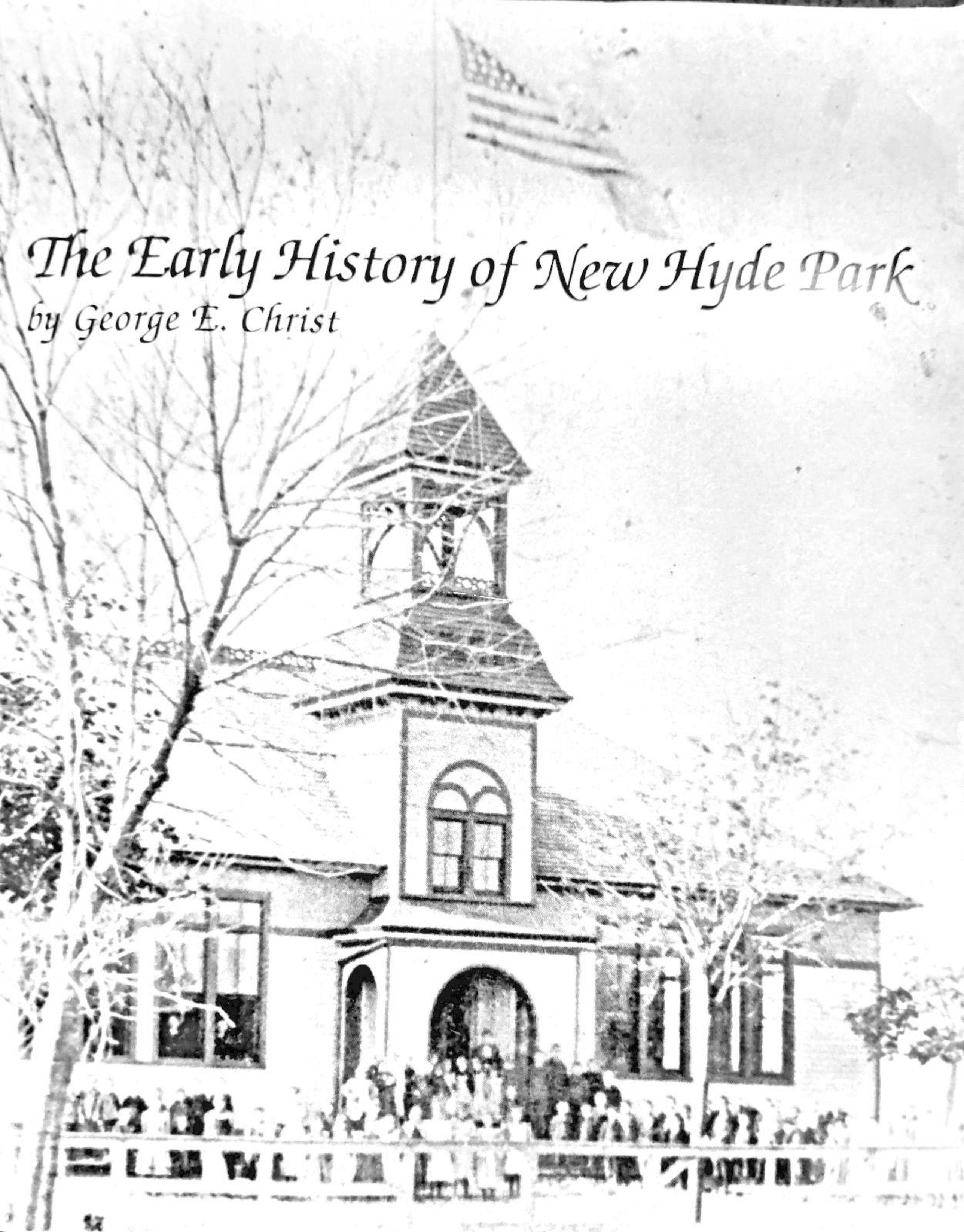
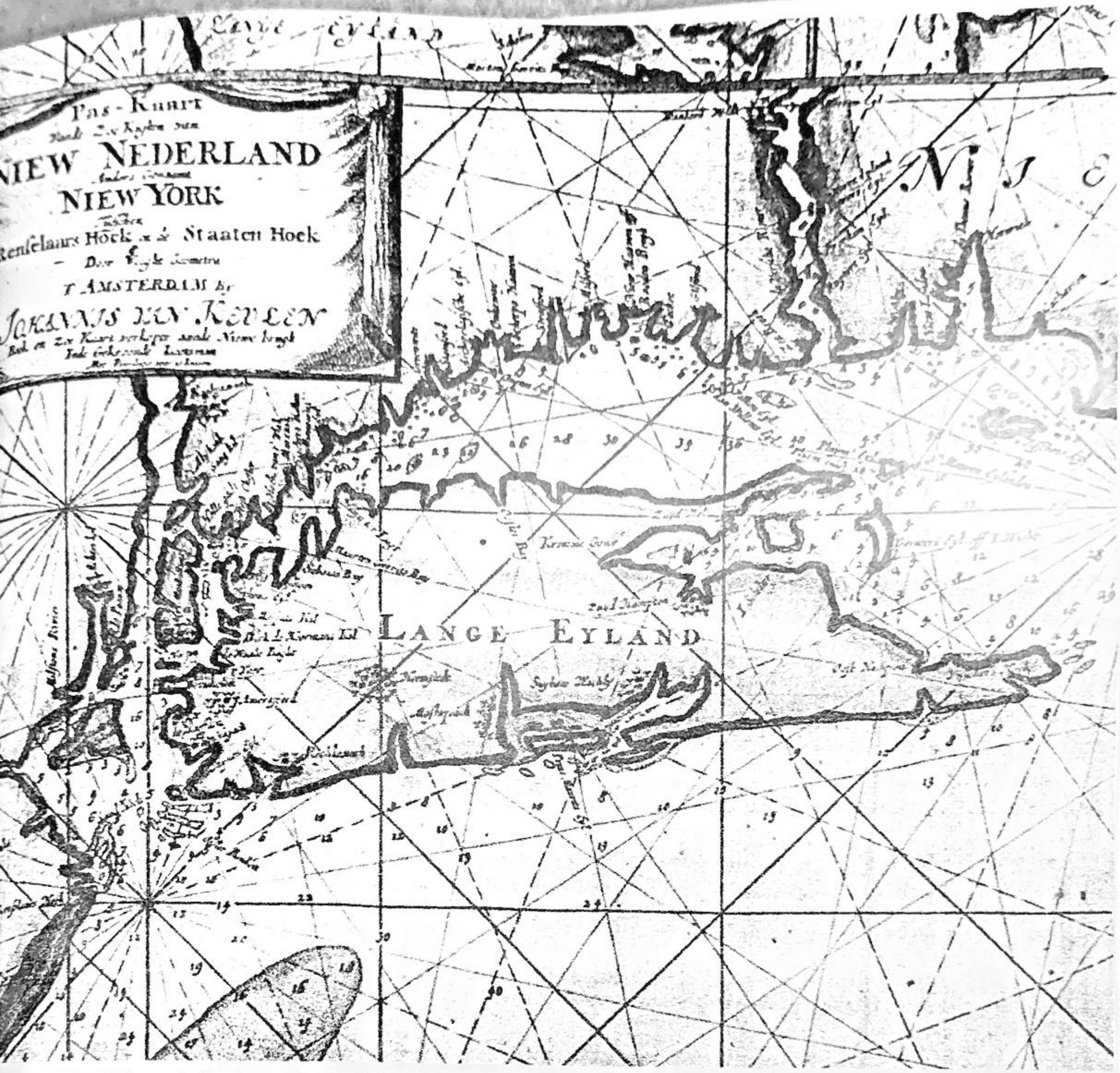
The Early History of New Hyde Park

by George E. Christ



Front Cover: 1893 - New Hyde Park Public Grade School.
New Hyde Park Road

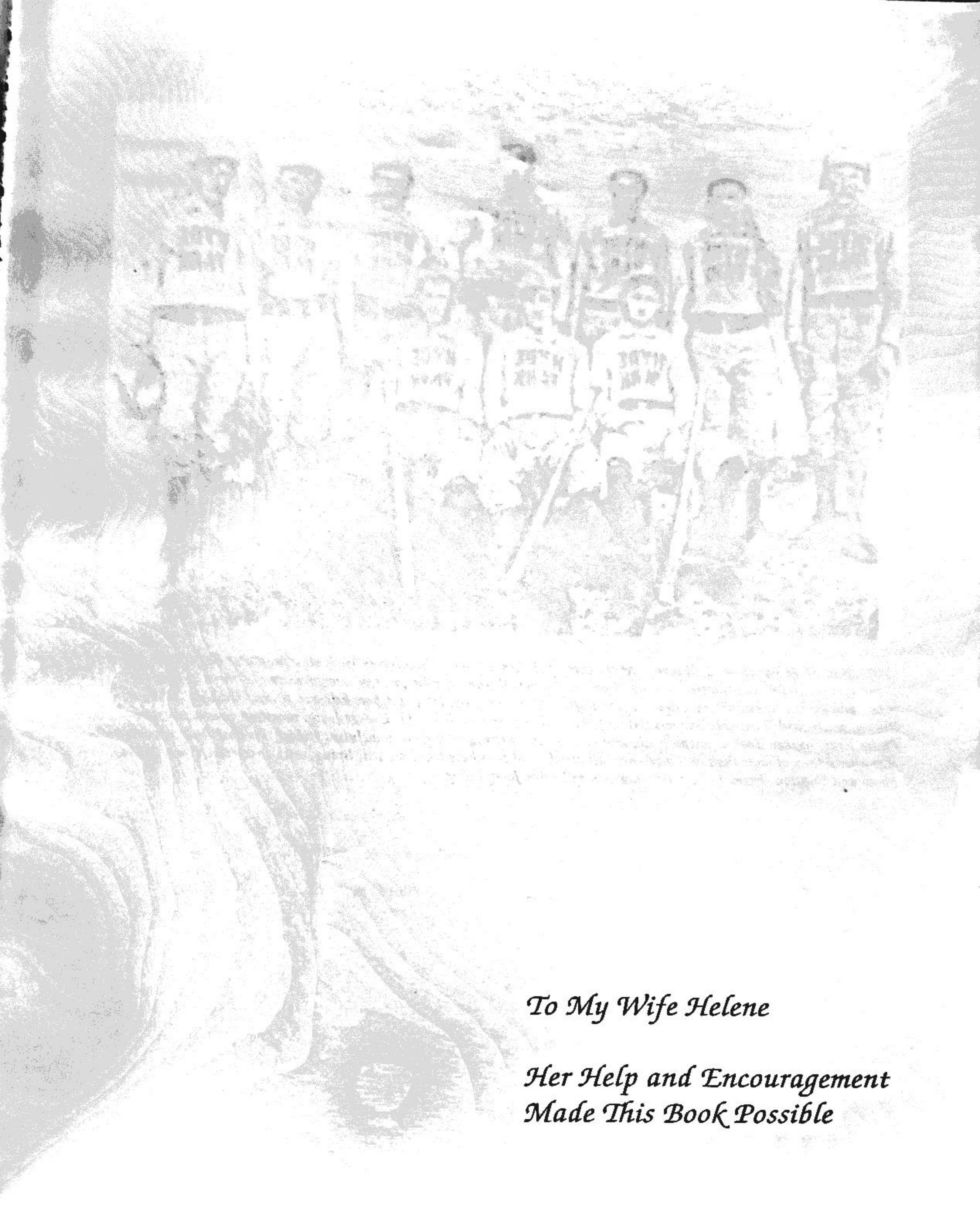


This 1668 map by Dutch cartographer Johannis Van Keulin is one of 80 featured in the exhibit "Long Island Maps and Their Makers" in Cold Spring Harbor.

The Early History of New Hyde Park

by George E. Christ

Appreciation to Mayor Warren Tackenberg and the Trustees–
Florence Lisanti, Bill Fischl, Frank Komornik, and Bob Seldomridge–
who appointed me Historian of the Village of New Hyde Park.



To My Wife Helene

Her Help and Encouragement
Made This Book Possible

1901 - New Hyde Park's baseball team. At the turn of the century when New Hyde Park was known as Hyde Park, many of our now pioneer residents were members of the local baseball team. Maybe you can recognise some of them as they are today, and as they looked 51 years ago. Left to Right - Standing: John Joerg, pitcher; Edward Klein, 3rd base; William Brown, center field; Lawrence Sommers, right field; Willie Sommers, left field; George Joerg, shortstop (deceased); and Philip Krug, catcher. Seated: Joseph Buck, 2nd base; Joseph Klein, center field; and Julius Riedel, 1st base. It is remarkable that after a span of more than half a century, all members of the above team are still living, with exception of one (noted). Photo and Caption: From 1952 article courtesy of Elaine Joerg Mangen

Table of Contents

Foreword

Section 1 The Pioneers 16

1 The Denton Family 18

2 Anton Herkomer 24

3 Emanuel and John Christ 26

4 Emanuel Christ Family 30

5 John Christ Family 44

6 Philip J. Miller 52

7 Benedick Hauck 54

8 Aaron Holman 56

9 David Holman 58

10 The Krug Family 62

11 The Baer Family 66

12 The Hoffmann Family 70

13 The Bowen Family 74

14 The Joerg Family 76

15 The Kiefer-Eschenbecker Family 82

16 The Miller Clan 92

17 The Schneider-Simon Family 100

18 Adolph and William Hausch 106

19 The Kiesling Family 112

Section 2 The Village 11
20 The Post Office 126
21 Churches 134
22 Schools 148
23 Fire Department 157
24 Medicine 160
25 War 164
26 New Hyde Park Inn 166
27 Development of Jericho Turnpike 174
28 "Vanderbilt Cup" Races 176
29 Long Island Railroad 180
30 The New Hyde Park Bank - A Pictorial 184
31 Historic Houses - A Pictorial 188
Section 3 George E. Christ 190
32 Biography 196
33 D-Day 202
34 Ardennes Battle of the Bulge 206
35 Epilogue 208
Acknowledgments 208

This is the early history of the Village of New Hyde Park

The reasons for writing it are several:

First, memories fade and descendants of the early settlers are vague on which events took place and when.

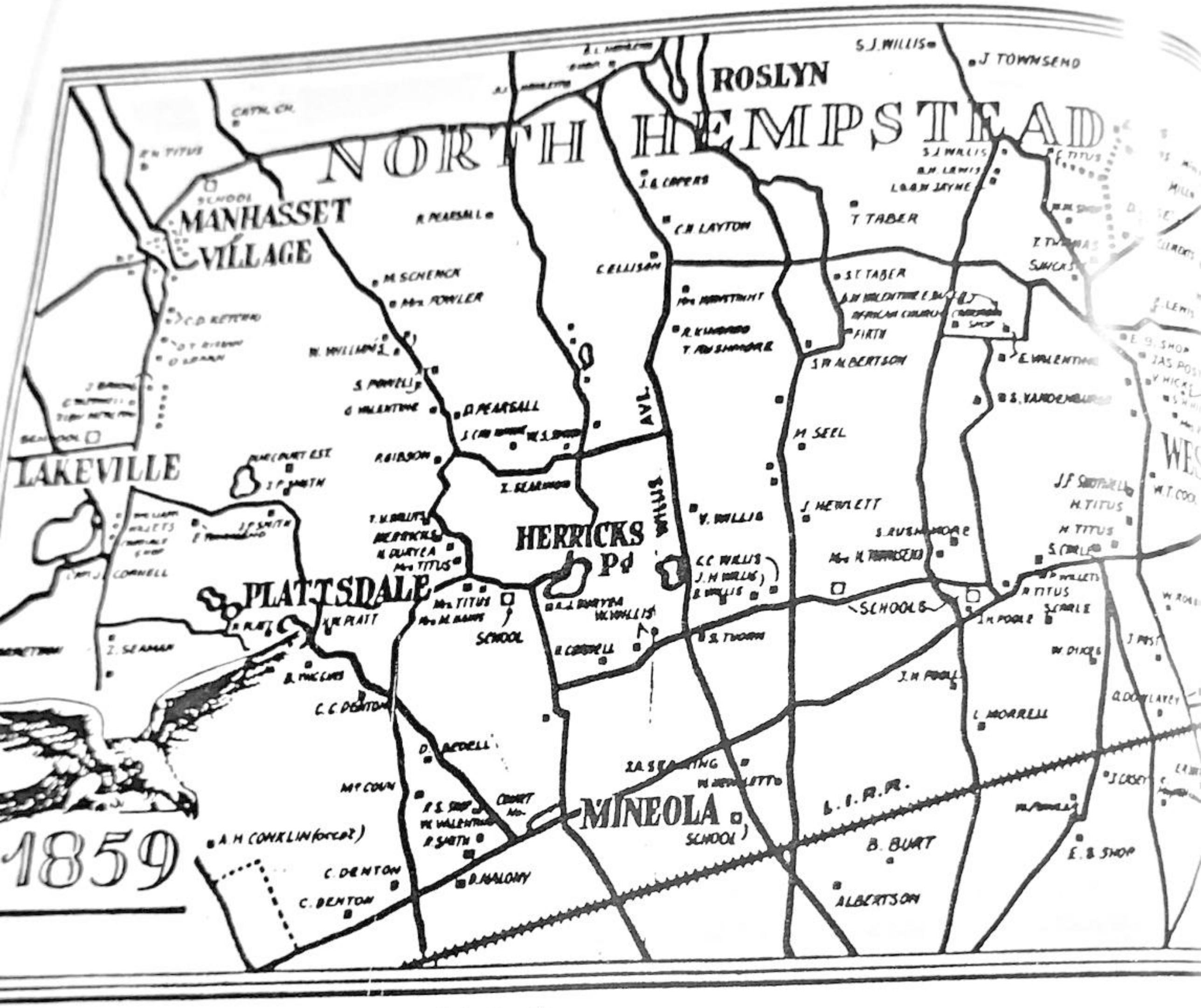
Second, as the Historian of the Village, I am enthusiastic about the task. I was always curious about life in the old times. Having been born in 1915, and my grandmother, who lived with us and helped raise me, only dying in 1934, I am a direct link to that past. I remember many a day sitting with my grandmother and listening to her tell me about the families and happenings in the Village.

Third, many young people encouraged by their teachers came with questions, and it is to them I want to dedicate this history.

Some documents and pictures I managed to save, and the bulk of them are on display at the Village Hall. I visited churches and their cemeteries, searched archives and old newspapers and enlisted the help of undertakers. To make the history more complete, I contacted as many descendants of the original families as I could and asked them to write their own story. Several of them did, though at times my research resulted in different facts.

I want to express my gratitude to every one who was of help in compiling this history and want to thank all the families for their cooperation. And a very heartfelt "THANK YOU" to my wife Helene.

George E. Christ



The earliest map found of our area. Few of the familiar roads had been laid out. Notice that the Denton Family was well represented.

Foreword

Journey Into The Past

You might think this history of a little village, of people you don't know and who lived a long, long time ago, is not relevant to your life, your family and your century. Your parents or grandparents did not live in New Hyde Park, they arrived late; and anyway, you are looking to the future, not the past.

But, sometimes we should stop and reflect on that past. Not to be nostalgic and yearn for a simpler life, but to learn from it and appreciate the present.

The focus of this history is the pioneer families of the last century in Hyde Park (The name was changed to New Hyde Park in 1871). The history continues with some of the more interesting details of this century.

In the last century the new arrivals in "Hyde Park" were German families. Only later came the Polish and Italian immigrants.

Compared to the other nationalities, the Germans had it easy. There was already a pre-civil war immigration of 1,500,000 Germans to this country. By 1860 there were 100,000 Germans in New York City, and they supported twenty churches, fifty German language schools, ten book stores, five printing establishments and a German theater. The German schools stressed assimilation, good citizenship and the proper learning of the English language.

Yet, the young men and their families in deciding to leave their country, must have had some doubts, some fears of maybe not succeeding. Why else did they come with brothers and friends?

Life was hard for new immigrants. Polish people were recruited to work on farms, Italians on construction. When they left their homeland, they did not imagine the fate which awaited them. Instead of being able to make a decent living, they fell into the clutches of unscrupulous exploiters. You heard of the Irish who could not get jobs. With the Italians, it was the opposite. Italian speaking patrons rounded them up and for delivering them to construction companies, charged a price per head to the employers. By 1897, Italians made up 75 percent of the New York City construction workers. Wages were very low and living conditions appalling. Yet the children of these incredibly poor and hardworking people made it out of the slums and are now "Americans," some more, some less successful and employed in every conceivable profession. Conditions for new immigrants were so bad that the government passed immigration laws to prevent the exploitation of the masses of people who came to this country.

America needed workers. For centuries life did not change. People lived mostly in villages, doing the same work their fathers and grandfathers did: wearing the same clothes, eating the same food and worshiping at the same church. Now, with the industrial revolution, all that came to a halt. In factories, workers were no longer craftsmen, but a mere part of the mechanical process. In many ways life became harsher.

Yet it was an exciting time. There were all these new inventions. By 1867, the first typewriter was manufactured. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell

Town of

NORTH HEMPSTEAD

Scale 3300 ft = 1 inch

1891

patented the telephone. In 1878, Western Union laid 195,000 miles of telegraph lines. In 1888, adding machines were used in offices.

Through 1850, the North industrialized. By the end of 1850, the North had four-fifths of America's factories and two-thirds of railroad mileage. "Yankee ingenuity" manufactured circular saws, power looms, rotary presses, hydraulic turbines, shoe peggers, steam locomotives and many more products.

By 1859, northern factories were turning out 37,000 sewing machines a year. All that expansion depended on immigration. If there were too many manufactured goods and not enough buyers, an economic downturn and even depressions resulted.

Those few immigrant families in Hyde Park escaped the worst conditions of the cities. They had some skills, were creative craftsmen and tried to find their own niche. Their stories are in this book. Their life was not to easy. Children of both sexes had to help get the firewood, feed the chickens, pick the beans and watch the little ones. Young people had responsibilities very early and helped provide for their family. There was no such thing as teenage years.

Women especially were burdened by endless duties, shackled to the drudgery of daily life. For them, the times were not modern. Early on they had only fireplaces where they cooked their food. Water had to be heated. Laundry was washed in the yard, and the kitchen garden had to be attended. If they raised chickens, they had to be killed and cleaned before they could be cooked. Floors were just wood and had to be scrubbed. And most families had many children. Yet they raised them without the benefit of an instruction manual. In addition to all those household duties, the women in this book had to help their husbands. In the inns they cooked the meals, in the bakery they supervised the bread making and the carpenter wives got the job of painting the window frames. Many times Elizabeth Christ had to lend a hand in the blacksmith shop, and it was her responsibility to take care of customers in their general store. No wonder the businesses and residences were under one roof. Actually, women liked taking care of a business. There was just a door separating the kitchen from the store, and when a buyer or sometimes a visitor made himself heard by hollering "Yoo-Hoo," the women had a chance to leave their work and chat awhile, relax a little and find out the latest gossip. And gossip there was. You just couldn't keep anything secret, and there was not much privacy. True, people worked very hard, but they were not perfect.

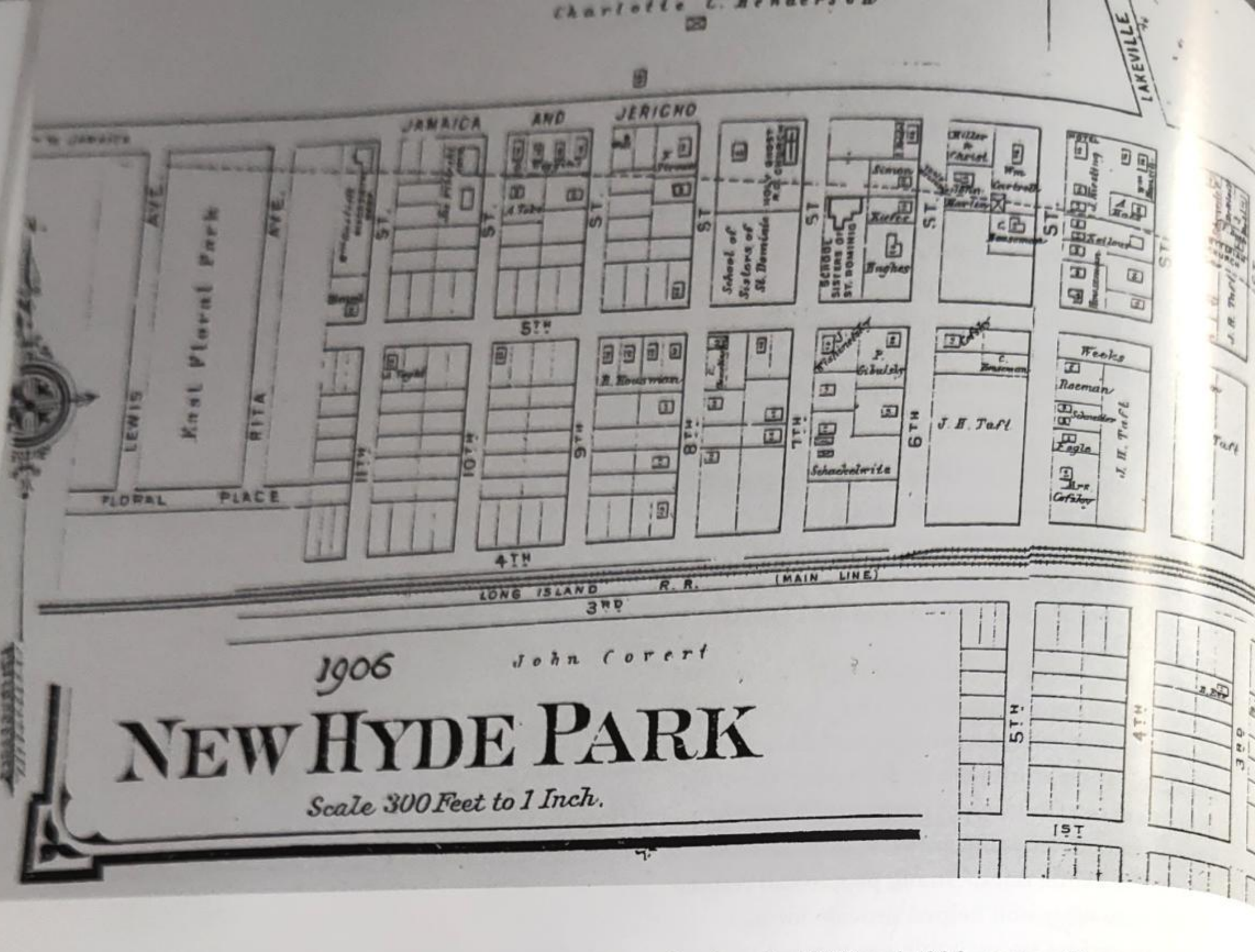
Women were especially annoyed with their menfolk. Evenings they frequented the inns. There were only a few families around, but Hyde Park had six inns:

1. Nick Reuter Inn, later Nick Krug Dance Hall
2. Hyde Park Inn, J. Christ, P. J. Miller, Schulz
3. Chris Kiefer Hotel
4. William A. Hausch Hotel
5. Nassau Inn, Joseph Kiesling
6. Joseph Filarski Hotel, later New Hyde Park Inn

Of course, those inns were of necessity to the farmers of the East End of Long Island who brought their produce by horse and wagon to the market in Brooklyn. New Hyde Park was about halfway, so they stopped to feed and water their horses, exchange them for a new pair and take care of their own needs. The "locals" too liked to congregate at the saloons. That's where the men exchanged some news with one's neighbors, discussed the grave and what they thought, for women at least, was the esoteric subject of politics. Women considered all these discussions a little silly. They didn't mind, but for one thing–as it happens now, then too–men got drunk. Late at night when they left the inns, their worries forgotten, they felt quite happy and also became quite noisy. So when Elizabeth Christ was

---

Left: 1891 map shows development along Jericho Turnpike. Notes - F. Miller, E. Christ, Miller's Hotel. Old courthouse in Garden City Park, later used as an insane asylum, is currently Waldbaum Shopping Center.



annoyed with all the raucousness, she just poured a pail of water on the revelers who were gathered outside, just having left the inn of her brother-in-law next door. Well, women put up with it. What they were not willing to put up with was the loss of money. Men didn't spend only what they had in their pockets, but charged and squandered in this way future earnings. They went into debt, and at home women had a hard time making ends meet. It happened all over the country and that's when women started to be activists. They wanted control by law of the manufacture and sale of liquor. That movement was called "The Temperance Movement." In some states there were already "dry laws" on the books by the middle of the last century, but it was only after the First World War in 1919 that national prohibition became law. That was the 18th Amendment to the Constitution and was called the "Volstead Act."

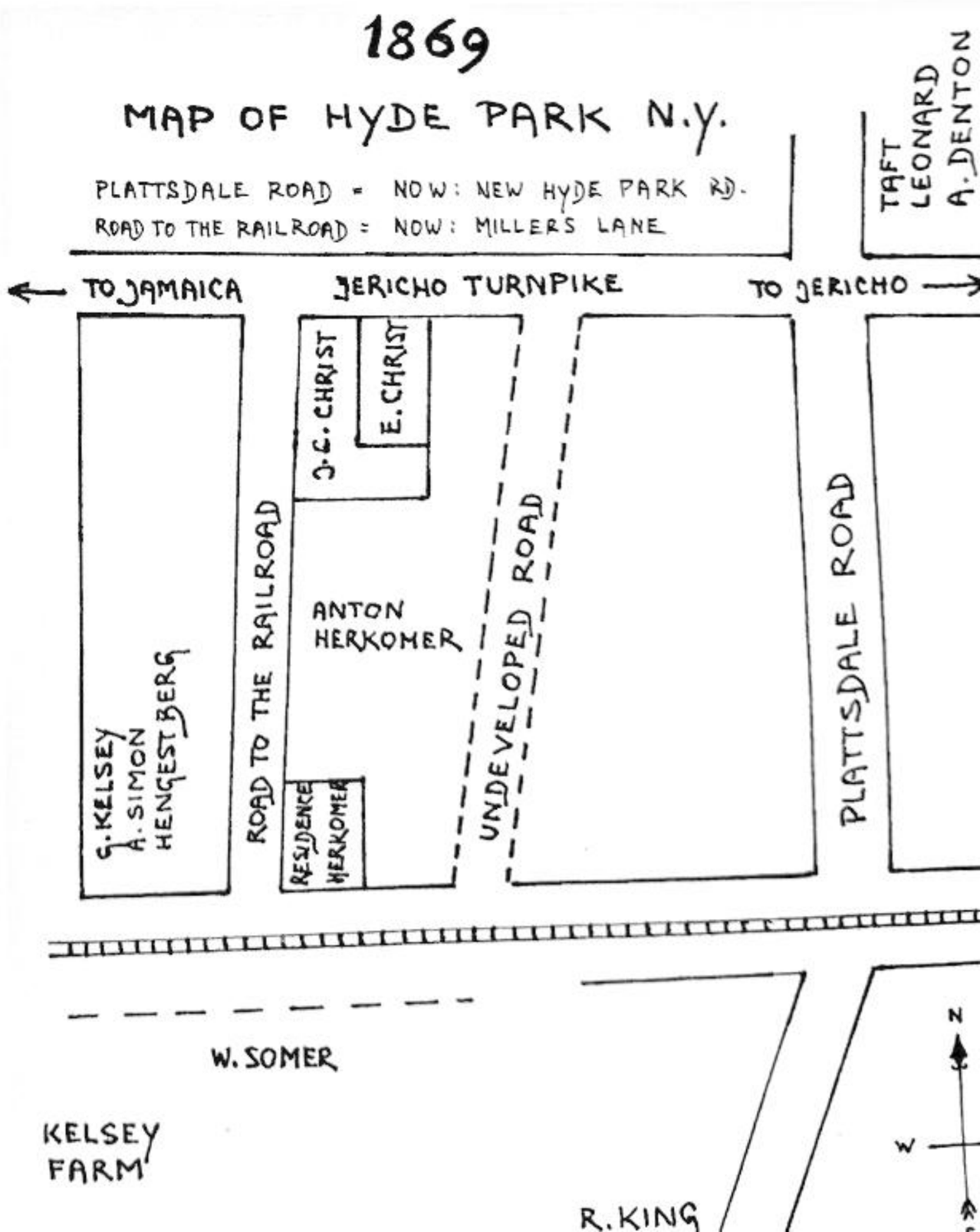
Look at the 1869 and 1906 maps . You can see the little hamlet became a village.

And the lessons we learned? I will mention just a few, but you can come up with many more.

1. Men and women have to work hard to make a living, regardless of whether they work at home or commute or whether they wear a business suit or overalls.
2. Since ancient times, people succumb to the sickness of alcoholism.
3. We have now many labor saving devices which make housework easier. Women now work outside the home, but don't have fewer responsibilities.
4. The greatest change took place in the life of the children. Then, the emphasis was mostly on physical work; now, it is on education and book learning. Then, children just had to obey; now, they are encouraged to reason for themselves.

(left) 1906 Map of New Hyde Park. Courtesy: George E. Christ, Historian: Village of New Hyde Park

(below) 1869 Map of New Hyde Park by Helene Christ.



But the most striking difference was in their family life. Not only were their mothers at home, but also they could observe their fathers at work. They were surrounded by aunts, uncles, cousins and the whole community acted like an extended family.

This is the History of Your Village, and I greatly hope you will enjoy reading it.

George E. Christ

Additional Early History

Governor Thomas Dongan, later the second Earl of Limerick, became New York's Royal Governor in 1682. One of his first official acts was to convene the Assembly of Community Representatives from New York and southern New England (then part of the New York Province) that drew up the "Charter of Liberties and Privileges" which became a basis for the New York State and American Constitutions.

The towns of Flushing and Hempstead, pleased with their liberal Governor and not above buttering him up a bit, presented him with various gifts of land which ultimately totaled 900 acres. In 1688 Governor Dongan built his mansion on the east side of Lakeville Road, about 1,000 feet south of what is now Hillside Avenue in North New Hyde Park section of the Town of North Hempstead (North Hempstead split off from the Town of Hempstead after the American Revolution.)

In the late 1600s, an Indian trail existed from west to east through this territory, which became a horse and wagon road and later Jericho Turnpike.

Governor Dongan had little opportunity to enjoy his new manor house. The same Duke of York who had named him Governor signed the Charter of Liberties but, considering it too liberal for his loyal tastes, pocketed the document in England, preventing it from going into effect. Governor Dongan was a Roman Catholic, and when an aristocratic Anti-Catholic revolution pushed James II off the British throne in 1688, Governor Dongan lost his Governorship and was forced to flee to New England in 1689 to escape persecution. During his Governorship, Governor Dongan created the county system of government on Long Island, dividing it into Kings, Queens and Suffolk (Nassau was carved out of Queens in 1899 following consolidation of Greater New York's 5 boroughs). He set up a courthouse on the N.E. corner of what is now Marcus Avenue and Jericho Turnpike in Garden City Park. He foresaw the danger of a French-Indian alliance in North America and laid down the line of defense which helped to make England the winner of the French and Indian War [illegible]4-63. The bachelor ex-governor returned to [illegible]ome country in 1691, subsequently falling he[illegible] the Earldom of Limerick, Ireland. It was a h[illegible]ow legacy. All the lands of his family had be[illegible] seized by the Crown before he became Earl. He was a poor man when he died in London in 1715.

Dongan Manor passed into the hands of Lt. Governor George Clark of the Province of New York. Clark was married to Anne Hyde and was believed to have named the estate Hyde Park honoring both his wife and the ancient similarly named manor in London. Late in the 17th Century, New Market race course was laid out on the plains south of Hyde Park. Its' meets were a social event of Colonial times, bringing large numbers of guests to the former Dongan Manor. The plains themselves, covered with coarse grass and agriculturally unpromising, had almost no settlements.

After the Clark tenure, the Manor went to Josiah Martin and Judge George Ludlow. Various parts were parceled to other owners in 1784. It faded from public notice until May 1817 when William Cobbett, an English Journalist, pamphleteer agriculturist, became its tenant. Cobbett was the most extraordinary visitor ever to arrive in Hyde Park. A poor English farm boy, he educated himself almost entirely by his own efforts, mastering English and French. But there he left the Horatio Alger Jr. formula in the lurch. Instead of pleasing his superiors, he spent a lifetime badgering them with his brilliantly sarcastic political broadsides. He was chased out of both England and the United States for attacking their respective "Establishments" and was nearly tarred and feathered in Philadelphia for espousing the Royalist cause after Britain had been defeated in the American Revolution. Cobbett served with the British Army in Canada during the American Revolution, rising to the rank of regiment sergeant major. Discharged in England, he demanded that the regiment's officers be tried for theft. His case was well documented but it made him so unpopular that he fled to America. Settling in Philadelphia, he openly advocated royalism,

displayed a large portrait of the highly disliked George III in his bookshop window and assailed the French Revolution.

Never one to pull a verbal punch, Cobbett went after Dr. Benjamin Rush, perhaps the most celebrated physician in America, denouncing his treatment of yellow fever victims by gigantic "purges and blood-lettings". He publicly accused Rush of killing President Washington with this blood-letting therapy and Rush replied with a libel suit. Cobbett, after losing $5,000 on the case, went back to England. Cobbett, who had written under the pseudonym of "Peter Porcupine" in the U.S., continued his writings at home in the weekly "Political Register," his own newspaper. Attacking Whigs and Tories with equal vigor, he was at once accurate, witty and eminently readable. In 1809, he came to the defense of a group of British soldiers who had been flogged for protesting unfair pay deductions. For this, he was fined 1,000 pounds and sent to Newgate Prison for two years. He continued to edit his weekly in prison, blasting the government with unabated enthusiasm but gradually losing all his funds and property. Released from jail, he took up the defense of unemployed and underpaid farm and industrial workers until his re-arrest appeared imminent.

In 1817, he again crossed the Atlantic, moved into Hyde Park and kept up a heavy schedule of writing and farming. At Hyde Park he wrote his "Grammar of the British Language," a work that irritated some scholars but was so clearly written that it proved immensely beneficial to the working class students. "A Journal of a Years Residence in the United States" was also written at Hyde Park, as was "American Gardening" the product of his agricultural experiments on Long Island. He is credited with introducing the Swedish Turnip or Rutabaga into this country and popularizing the Hawthorn Hedge as a natural fence to enclose cattle.

The Main House at Hyde Park burned down on May 1819 forcing Cobbett to go back to England. Although he had vehemently opposed Thomas Paine, American Revolutionary Pamphleteer, during his earlier stay in America, his views had turned liberal in the intervening years, and he took Paine's bones to England to honor his memory.

In 1859, the A. H. Conklin family rebuilt the Manor House and farmed the land and, in 1870, William M. Ingraham acquired the farm. In 1906, Frank Franklin purchased the land and grew potatoes on the farm for a good many years.

Cattle raising was the first industry of the area south of Hyde Park. The opening of the western cattle country, however, squeezed out the Long Island stockmen. With improved farming methods the unproductive plains became excellent truck farming territory.

When the question was asked, what is Hyde Park? The answer always was a few farmers living in scattered places. However in the 1860s the following families were living there: G. & A. Kelsey, C. Denton, Anton Simon, William Somer, Richard King, John Covert, Taft, P. Wiggins, S. R. Heyeman, J. Wicks, W. Ingraham, E. Hengesberg and Anton Herkomer.

Additional Settlers

In addition to the families for which histories are provided in Section 1, the following pioneers also settled in New Hyde Park in these early years.

From 1890 to 1906, the population of New Hyde Park expanded and many more families arrived, including: Bergen, Epping, Marshall, Strauss, Wiggins, Hughes, Eck, Alwang, Wagoner, Odd, Taft, Well, Toke, Housman, J. Brown, P. Brown, Reuter, Weeks, Schackelwitz and Gartrell.

From 1910 to 1930, the following families also settled in New Hyde Park: Rich, Levi, Limpitlaw, Martin, Savage, Hyman, Wolf, Yazijian, Blauberg, Remsen, Weber, Sirlin, Dill, Dillon, McDonald, Barkentine, Lessmann, Bornholdt, Schringer, Musgnug, Kovenhoven, Becker, Halackiewitz, Fairhurst, Farina, Cohen, Cepikoff, Blake and Scott.

Section 1 - The Pioneers

1 The Denton Family
2 Anton Herkomer
3 Emanuel and John Christ
4 Emanuel Christ Family
5 John Christ Family
6 Philip J. Miller
7 Benedick Hauck
8 Aaron Holman
9 David Holman
10 The Krug Family
11 The Baer Family
12 The Hoffmann Family
13 The Bowen Family
14 The Joerg Family
15 The Kiefer-Eschenbecker Family
16 The Miller Clan
17 The Schneider-Simon Family
18 Adolph and William Hausch
19 The Kiesling Family

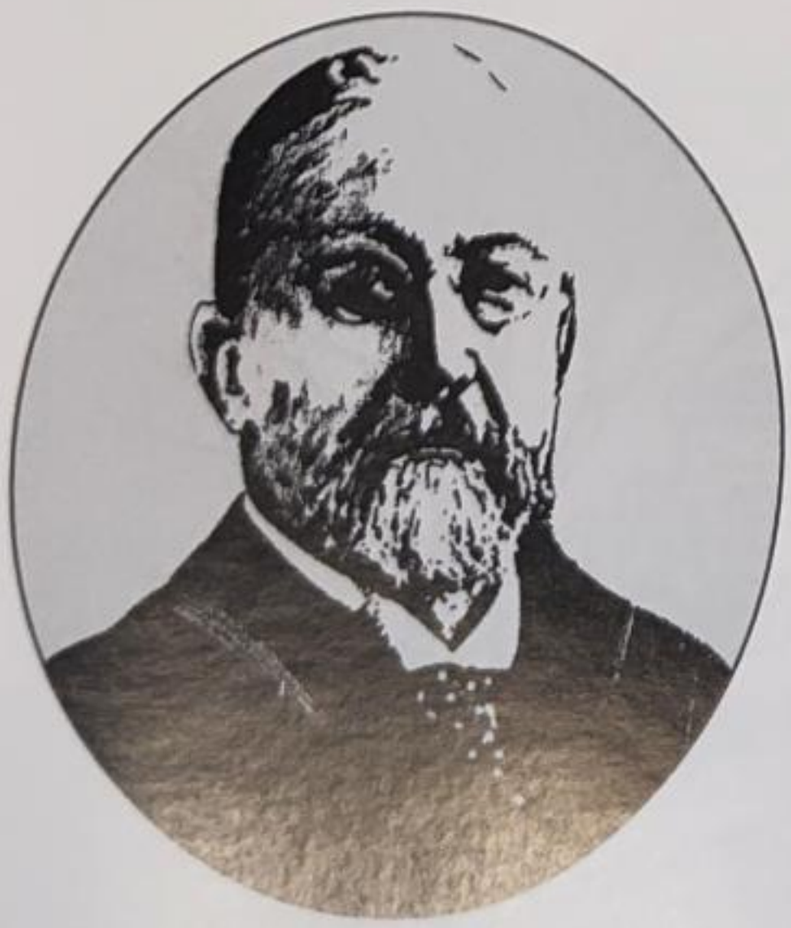
Augustus Denton

Augustus Denton was born in 1843. He inherited his father's farm. In 1870 he married Sarah Allen, who's family was the owner of the "Allen Hotel" in Mineola. He moved out of the old homestead and built a new home for his bride at 2045 Jericho Turnpike, which now is a McDonald's. He was still a farmer, but his heart was not in it.

There were great changes in agriculture. New farm machinery saved money. The railroad opened the country, so markets could easily be reached, and the Midwest was a serious competitor to the smaller farmers on the island. Therefore, Augustus gave up farming and leased his land to new immigrants.

He was stately, rich and respected and spent a great deal of time on community affairs. In 1885, he ran for office, was elected Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead. He was re-elected three more times.

In the last century, the middle of the island was part of Queens County. Over the years, several attempts were made to break away and create a new county. People primarily objected to high taxes, considered their representation unequal and thought the city management as unscrupulous. In 1876, a bill was introduced at the State Legislature for the forming of a new county with the name "Ocean County."



Augustus Denton

The bill was defeated, but the citizens co
under the leadership of Benjamin Hicks
up. Then in 1896, after the five boroughs
consolidated into "Greater New York," th
Legislature adopted a resolution and a ne
was born. The date was January 1, 1899,
county was named "Nassau." It was not a
name. Back in 1693, all of Long Island wa
"Ye Island Of Nassau," in honor of William
Nassau and Orange.

Benjamin Hicks, who spent much effort and
years on behalf of the county, saw his dream
become reality. In gratitude for his work, it
only fitting that he should be named: "Fathe
Nassau County."

For Augustus, too, it was an exciting time. Fi
they succeeded in breaking away from New Y
City. He was already the supervisor of the tow
North Hempstead but now in 1899 he became
first Chairman of the Nassau County Board of
Supervisors. He had great aspirations for this
county–to make it beautiful, befitting all the we
people who lived on the North Shore. He autho
rized a proposal for a $150,000.00 bond issue to
build a county seat. Augustus was a smart politi
but, like so many before him, he forgot that peop
don't like paying taxes. There was such an outcr
and so much opposition by the public against the
project that he postponed it indefinitely.

Augustus was treasurer of the Jericho Plank Road Company. He served as Director on the Board of the Hempstead Bank and Nassau County Bank (Mineola) and was a Trustee at the Roslyn Savings Bank. His membership included the Masonic Morton Lodge No. 3 in Hempstead and the Shield o Honor Lodge No. 3 in Hyde Park. He died in 1900.

Eugene Denton

The life of Eugene Denton, Augustus' son, can be compared to that of an English gentleman. His family was prominent, already living on the island for over three centuries. They were landowners, distinguished, supporters of their church and involved in civic affairs. His father's record is well known, but there were other Dentons who served the public in various degrees. One of them, Lawrence Denton, was the 1825 County Treasurer when it was still part of Queens County.

Eugene was born on January 23, 1875. He received a private education and attended St. Pauls in Garden City where the emphasis was on discipline and physical fitness. He was an outstanding student, attended college and received his law degree from Columbia in 1898. In 1905, he founded his own law firm. His partner, Edwin Weeks, later served at the Surrogate Court.

Like his father Augustus, Eugene entered public service. He was a charter member of the Nassau County Bar Association and later became president. He was elected School Director for the Town of North Hempstead and Chairman of the New Hyde Park Board of Elections in 1899. He was a prominent member of the Republican Party and received the nomination for the Office of Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead in 1907. But unlike his father he didn't have smooth sailing. The man who opposed him was an unknown, the son of an immigrant innkeeper by the name of Philip J. Christ. There was no way Philip could receive the nomination from the Republican Party, so he decided to run as a Democrat. Many of his advisors thought that a poor choice. The Democrats were running New York City and, under Boss Tweed, the corruption of the city government reached its height. The Republicans lost no time trying to link a Democrat to the city party. But Philip had a good adviser and campaign manager in the person of his father-in-law Max Gotsch. Max himself was an immigrant, lived in New Hyde Park on Herkomer Street, and was a liquor salesman. He knew all the inns, their proprietors and many of the patrons. Besides, the demographics of the county were changing. The English and Dutch were now the minority, and the Germans were all over. Max took Philip to all the inns. Max tried to expose him to the greatest number of people and, since Philip spoke German, he could convince them that he had no connection to Tammany Hall.

Eugene was educated, experienced and came from a prominent family with a history of public service. He was sure the voters would put him into office.

Philip's campaigning was personal, and the voters chose him. Maybe they thought Philip was closer to them and would understand their problems, while they perceived Eugene as being of an elite class and somewhat aloof.

Eugene continued with his law practice and in the same year (1907) built the Denton Building on the corner of Mineola Blvd. and Old Country Road, which still houses law offices.

He was an active participant in the establishment of the New Hyde Park Fire District and Union Free School District No. 5.

Eugene Denton

Original residence of Augustus and Eugene W. Denton.

Denton residence converted to McDonald's.